

principles be primarily agreed upon, and rules laid down for our guidance in debate. Now, although it is bootless labour for any one to rise and pronounce wholesale objections against any of the styles of architecture now practised in this country, there are portions or particular features of any of those styles which form legitimate objects of attack or subjects for discussion, but for my own part I could not waste time in listening to that sort of crude and unsupported censure and objection to which I have before alluded.

In every case it should be imposed as a condition to the putting forth of an objection, that the objector be prepared by actual graphic illustrations to show the improvement to be gained by adopting his view of the case. You have already had an example of what I would propose, in that paper of Mr. Kerr's in which he objects to the arrangement of the pediments of Grecian Doric temples;* although, unfortunately, he did not complete his illustration by drawings, in respect to his proposal to improve the Grecian Doric column by placing beneath it a square tile to counter-balance the abacus. But, however, Mr. Kerr's mode, so far as it extended, I must maintain to be the only one that we ought for a moment to tolerate.

Let us suppose, for further example, that an objection is started against any particular feature in an architectural composition, no matter of what style, of what date, or of what degree of celebrity. We will say, for instance, that the matter objected to is the introduction of grotesque figures of animals in Gothic architecture, and that one of the turrets and flying buttresses of Henry the Seventh's chapel is selected; perhaps, also at the same time, some other features in these portions of the building are condemned.

Well, all that we should require is, that the objector, or he that condemns, should produce two faithful and intelligible drawings, the one showing the example as it exists, and the other as he would improve it. Let him accompany these by his best reasons for the suggested improvement, and we shall have at once the only tangible and instructive mode of controversy on matters architectural.

With regard to the use of the grotesque in Gothic architecture, perhaps I may be permitted to say a few words. It appears to me that those who condemn it hedge themselves in, as it were, with one principle of architectural effect, and cannot see that there are many others. Why, let us ask, did the Greek imagination introduce the repulsive satyr, side by side with the graceful Bacchante or the beautiful wood-nymph? And why, to this day, do painters delight in similar contrarieties? Why is it that the musician introduces passing discords in such a manner as to be absolutely painful to the ear until they are resolved into their succeeding harmonies? And wherefore have our most renowned poets introduced in their sublimest poems and dramas the lowest buffoonery, and made the most sudden and determined descents from the heroic to the vulgar, from the sublime to the ridiculous? May we not truly answer that it is for the sake of that principle universal throughout nature—CONTRAST? And such is the principle upon which the grotesque is made to mingle with the beautiful in architecture. To recur, parenthetically, for one moment, to dramatic poetry, it appears to me that, taking *Æschylus* and *Euripides* as the exponents of the Greeks, and *Shakspere* as of ourselves, we have at once the same elements of difference between their dramas as those which exist between the architecture of the Greeks and that of the middle ages of modern Europe; and yet, so much more general is the predilection for the piquancy of contrast than for the insipidity of uniformity, that even the Greeks were not wholly free from the practice of introducing the grotesque. It is true that for the most part they dealt in the horrible instead of the comical, introducing Gorgons, furies, and so on,—but we must not forget those odd-looking horned fellows, half men half goats, that I have before mentioned. Then again, they had their *Silenus*: surely he was no great beauty. And be it remembered that all these have been used in the sculptured and painted deco-

rations of classical architecture. Moreover, I would ask, what are the centaurs in the metopes of the Parthenon; and the half-human half-fishy monsters in the frieze of the monument of *Lysicrates*, but grotesques?

Nevertheless, we cannot deny that the Gothic architects indulged in the grotesque much more freely than did the ancients, but not a jot more than the peculiarities of their style demanded. What else could be so well adapted for giving picturesque beauty, contrast, and effective outline, to the mitres and terminations of mouldings in Gothic buildings, as those queer-looking griffins, bogs, dogs, and devils, which the chisels of our old English masons have left us?

Still, I am not here to defend, through thick and thin, everything that precedent-mongers would have us respect and adhere to in Gothic architecture. If grotesque figures cannot be introduced significantly and as an augmentation of the general effect, I say, by all means let them be dispensed with; and, as a general rule, I would submit, that however grim and angular such figures might be on the exterior portions of an edifice, internally they should exhibit solely the most graceful and purely beautiful forms.

I am fully conscious that this paper of mine is of a somewhat desultory character. In truth, I have had no time for condensation and arrangement. I will therefore proceed to impart the gist of what I would say in a few concluding remarks. I would contend, then, that it is utterly useless to attempt to exclude from favour any one of the styles which the members of our profession, collectively, are called upon to practise; that, as regards one style with another, integrally, "comparisons are," as Mrs. Malaprop would say, "odorous;" that all new applications of an existing style or combinations of the principles of one style with another, and all proposed modifications or improvements, should be illustrated and explained by drawings. This mode would also open a fine field for contrasting, by ocular demonstration, compositions in two or more different styles, for the same subject; and I cannot conceive of anything more interesting than one and the same person preparing two designs in, we will say, the Italian and Gothic styles, and exhibiting them, with his observations, on what he conceives to be their relative merits, and the advantages of one style over the other.

Take even a church, for instance (for I am by no means of opinion that the Gothic is the only fit style for such a building), and fill in, as nearly as possible, the same outlines, one with classical, and the other with Gothic forms and details. This would enable us at once to form a true opinion, whereas all the mere talk in the world will leave us as far off the mark as ever.

I feel confident that this plan of proof and illustration, by drawings, would tend materially to enhance the interest of such matters, and would equally conduce to the improvement of the reasoning power and perceptions of all—so that, in the end, we should come to regard architecture as a grand and comprehensive whole, and not a mere thing of shreds and patches.

At all events, if, through lack of opportunity, or the non-possession of an active and all-grasping intellect, any amongst us should not attain to ability in all styles, I trust that there would be begotten within us a spirit of justice and impartiality, to say nothing of charity, which would prompt us to pay due respect to every one, according to his peculiar talent, whether he be merely a worker in the Grecian style, the Roman, the Italian, or the Gothic.

Perhaps we cannot all become equally successful in two or three styles of an entirely opposite nature; but it is in the power of most, if not all of us, to do one thing well, and respect the other for doing another thing well also. Look at painters—what various styles they choose, both of subject and execution, and yet how little they clash with one another. One chooses the high historical, and another the domestic or every day life. One selects landscape, another dogs and cattle, and another simple fruit and flowers; and yet I should think that the *Etty*s, *Mulready*s, the *Stanfields*, the *Landseers*, the *Coopers*, and *Lances* very cordially agree to disagree,

and each respect the other for what one can do and what another cannot do.

Let us then be actuated by the same spirit, and a truce to all carping and cavillings about style. Let us endeavour to improve and purify all styles, and, if possible, invent something new, rather than quarrel about what we have; and let us save ourselves from the ridicule and contempt of all reasonable men, by giving praise where praise is due, rather than be so free to condemn in cases wherein we know not what we condemn.

WILLIAM B. COLLINGS.

BUILDERS v. ARCHITECTS.

DESIGNS FOR THE UNITED GAS COMPANY, LIVERPOOL.

A SINGULAR case has occurred in Liverpool. The United Gas Company there, requiring larger offices and other premises, employed an architect to prepare plans. When the estimates came in (at about 8,000*l.*), they amounted to 2,000*l.* more than the committee had reason to expect. This caused much dissatisfaction, and they determined to put the plans and specifications into the hands of another professional man to examine and report as to their sufficiency, the mode of construction, arrangement, convenience, and cost. A report was presented of a favourable nature. The committee, however, were still dissatisfied, and then came to the resolution of applying to *six* builders for designs and estimates. Four of the builders declined sending in, but two firms which profess to combine the functions of architects and builders undertook to prepare plans accordingly, which plans, if approved, they were themselves to execute.

A number of architects, hearing of these circumstances called a meeting, and drew up the following resolutions, which have been sent to the directors of the gas company and extensively circulated elsewhere.

"1st. That the profession of an architect and the business of a builder are separate and distinct occupations, and cannot be combined without lowering the moral character of both, and acting detrimentally on the public interests. That such must be the effect the following brief reasons may tend to show.

The object of the architect (besides the preparation of designs, as works of art, which are to give a character to the town and the period), is to secure the best workmanship, the safest mode of construction, and the first quality of materials. In these respects he has often to come into collision with the builder, whose interests frequently appear to be conflicting. If the architect and builder are the same individual, who is to secure the due performance of his contract? A mere clerk of works, employed to superintend the designs prepared by another, must of necessity be a person of a class ill qualified to judge of the sufficiency of the plans and specifications. In the first instance, and unprepared to meet the emergencies which constantly arise on the erection of every building of any importance.

2nd. That, holding these views, we have heard with deep regret of the circular issued by the directors of the gas company inviting builders to send in plans and estimates for their intended erection in Newington. We cannot but believe that this step has been inadvertently taken, without due consideration of the injury inflicted on a respectable profession, and its ignorance of the results which must necessarily follow. The judgment between plans thus sent in, involving a complicated comparison of design, arrangement, construction, detail, kind of material used, completeness of specification, and estimate of cost (all mutually acting and reacting on each other), could only be safely entrusted to an architect of extensive experience and first-rate standing. No respectable architect would undertake such a task with builders' plans; and the qualifications required for this purpose would be employed with more effect in preparing original designs.

3rd. That the art of architecture can only be successfully cultivated where it is liberally encouraged. That to public companies especially, the profession naturally looks for examples of enlightened support, but if public bodies become so far misled by a mistaken idea of self-interest, as to act in this short-sighted and parsimonious manner, the public cannot complain if architecture, from a liberal art, is degraded into a petty trade.

4th. That feeling satisfied that the views stated above are equally founded in justice to themselves and the public, the undersigned are resolved by every means in their power to discourage and discountenance the practices above alluded to.

This document was signed by twenty architects.

* See p. 613, Vol. V.